

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 2, 2020

The Honorable Charles P. Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig,

I write to express concern and urge immediate improvements to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)'s management of tax refunds.

Many constituents have informed me that they are experiencing severe delays in awaiting refunds from their 2019 or 2020 taxes. The IRS website states that it issues "9 out of 10 refunds in less than 21 days,"¹ but I have heard from constituents waiting well over a month for their refund to arrive. Media reports suggest this is a pattern nationwide.²

These delays would create hardships for taxpayers in the best of times, but they are especially damaging in this current economic crisis. I recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic presents unique challenges for the IRS to fulfill its mission and some delays are understandable. Many IRS employees are doing the best they can while using antiquated technology that is not conducive to teleworking. However, taxpayers are counting on prompt receipt of their refunds to help make ends meet in this time of economic uncertainty.

With these concerns in mind, IRS must take all actions necessary to ensure that it can quickly process all outstanding refund payments. To that end, I encourage IRS to take the following steps:

- Evaluate its current information technology (IT) infrastructure and identify what IT improvements are necessary to enable workers to accomplish more of their responsibilities remotely;
- Identify any internal IRS policies hindering the ability of employees to work remotely, and provide immediate flexibility where possible;

¹ Internal Revenue Service, "What to Expect for Refunds This Year." January 8, 2020.

<https://www.irs.gov/refunds/what-to-expect-for-refunds-this-year>

² Rein, Lisa. "As the backlogged IRS struggles to open mail and answer the phone, taxpayers face long delays." *Washington Post*, May 20, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/as-the-backlogged-irs-struggles-to-open-mail-and-answer-the-phone-taxpayers-face-long-delays/2020/05/19/e89910d8-93ce-11ea-82b4-c8db161ff6e5_story.html

- Make it easier for taxpayers to contact IRS by telephone or online so taxpayers can resolve any delays and understand the status of their refunds;
- Work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and other public health experts to determine how IRS can rapidly and safely resume in-person operations for tasks that cannot be done remotely; and
- If necessary, request emergency supplemental appropriations from Congress to make these improvements as expeditiously as possible.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this issue and for your work to ensure that all taxpayers receive the refunds they are owed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elaine G. Luria". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "L".

Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress